

THE MARRIAGE INSTITUTION

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The notion that a religious ceremony makes a marriage, and defines it, had no currency until the sixteenth Christian century.

415. Chaldean demonism and marriage.

Chaldean demonism affected wedding ceremonies. The belief was that demons found their opportunities at great crises in life, when interest and excitement ran high. Then the demons rejoiced to exert their malignity on man to produce frustration and disappointment.

Cases are not rare in which the consummation of marriage was deferred, in barbarism and half-civilization, to ward off this interference of demons. The Chaldean groom's companions led him to the bride, and he repeated to her the formulas of marriage :

" I am the son of a prince. Silver and gold shall fill thy bosom. Thou shalt be my wife and I thy husband. As a tree bears abundant fruit, so great shall be the abundance which I will pour out on this woman." A priest blessed them and said:

" All which is bad in this man do ye [gods] put far away, and give him strength. Do thou, man, give thy virility. Let this woman be thy spouse. Do thou, woman, give thy womanhood, and let this man be thy husband." The next morning a ritual was used to drive away evil spirits.¹

416. Hebrew marriage before the exile. In the canon of the Old Testament we get no information at all about wedding ceremonies, or the marriage institution. The reason for this must be that marriage was altogether a family and domestic affair. It was controlled by very ancient mores, under which marriage and the family were conducted, as beyond question correct. It is in the nature of the case, in all forms of the father family, that a

girl until marriage was under the care and authority of her father or nearest male relative. The suitor must ask him to give her, and must induce him to give her by gifts. The transfer was made publicly that it might be known that she was the wife of such an one. The old Hebrew marriage seems to have consisted in this form of giving a daughter, in all its simplicity. We find a taboo on the union of persons related by consanguinity or affinity. Later there was a taboo on exogamic marriage. In the prophets there are metaphors and symbolical acts relating

¹ Maspero, *Peuples de l'Orient* I, 736.